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TESTING IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS CATERING TO SEASONAL AND MIGRANT FARMERS.

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THE PURPOSE OF TESTING IN SEASONAL AND MIGRANT FARMERS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IS NOT FOR MEASUREMENT BUT FOR DIAGNOSIS OF THE DEGREE AND INTENSITY OF HELP NEEDED. TESTS SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED BY THE TEACHER TWO OR THREE WEEKS AFTER CLASS BEGINS WHEN POSSIBLE. THEY SHOULD BE SCORED CAREFULLY, AND THE RESULTS ANALYZED AND INTERPRETED. THE AUTHOR RECOMMENDS THAT THE RESULTS SHOULD SERVE THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES--(1) DIAGNOSE PARTICIPANTS' NEEDS, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR AS A GROUP, (2) DETERMINE THE INITIAL PLACEMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS, (3) HELP MEASURE ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS WITHIN THE GROUP, (4) HELP DISCOVER WHAT CHANGES SHOULD BE MADE IN THE TEACHING PROGRAM OR TEACHING METHODS, AND (5) DETERMINE THE ELIGIBILITY OF THE STUDENT FOR AN ELEMENTARY OR SECONDARY DIPLOMA. (SF)

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Testing in Adult Basic Education Programs
Catering to Seasonal and Migrant Farmers

The specific topic given this paper (Testing in Adult Basic Education Programs Catering to Seasonal and Migrant Farmers) is by design and not by accident. Adult educators in general agree that there are no tests developed specifically for this population, therefore, it is difficult to recommend that an educator catering to this group should even be eclectic, however, limited use can be made of some existing tests providing the tester and/or adult educator recognizes the many limitations of any test used with this population.

The broad and fundamental objective of Seasonal and Migrant Farmers Programs is to ignite a motivational and aspirational process among these farm families which, it is hoped, will be self-perpetuating in terms of working towards higher goals. Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program as funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity are educational programs, not welfare programs. By virtue of the population with which we are concerned, therefore, we will have to look at the extent to which this group is motivated and not necessarily subject matter content retained.

According to psychologist David McClelland, personality comprises three major dimensions: traits, schema, and motives. A TRAIT is defined as "the learned tendency of an individual to react as he has reacted more or less successfully in the past in similar situations when similarly motivated." Personality variables such as cheerfulness, emotional control, and tenacity are examples of traits. While these and other traits can be inferred from an individual's overt behavior, SCHEMA are those internal frames of reference with which an individual confronts the world -- his beliefs, interests, ideas, and attitudes. Finally, the concept of MOTIVE helps to explain the PUSH and the DIRECTIVE ASPECT of human behavior.

For purposes of these Seasonal and Migrant Farmers Educational Programs it is this PUSH and the DIRECTIVE ASPECT of human behavior with which we are primarily concerned.

Psychologists have had a difficult time making good theoretical sense of our third personality dimension -- the "WHY" or MOTIVATIONAL ASPECT. A motive is a psychological state of the individual which we infer from his behavior. Thus if a person sets out to eat, we say his motive is hunger; if he struggles for success, his motive is ambition; if he acts uncharitably, his motive is selfishness. One of the founders of modern social psychology, William McDougal, made a list of primary human motives (he called them instincts) which included such things as curiosity, pugnacity, self-assertion, reproduction and repulsion. Further thought, however, led theorists to believe that such lists of motives really were nothing but descriptions of a wide range of human behavior.

Rather than explaining anything, they simply provided another way of categorizing outwardly similar behaviors and the number of such motives are categories depended solely on the grouping preferences at work. As one critical wag observed, if a person twiddles his thumbs, need we infer a thumb-twiddling motive?

This sort of thinking has let many psychologists to suggest that aside from physiological necessities such as those for food, air and rest the motivation concept should be abandoned or reformulated.

The minimum assumption to be made in explaining human action is that the individual will set goals whose attainment provides satisfaction, pleasure, or gratification. The particular goals of any one person, however, will depend on his history of rewards and punishments, these in turn probably depending on the value systems of his environment -- parents, social groups and general culture.

For our purposes, the important question concerns the measurement of human motives. Building upon the work of Harvard psychologist, Henry Murray, who theorized on the basis of Freud's insights, McClelland and his associates propose that motives are nothing more than a person's "inner concerns" and that if we learn these concerns we may predict much of his behavior.

What do we really know about the inner concerns of migrant and seasonal farmers? We have been working within the framework of our assumptions only, and based on our assumptions some few professionals are of the opinion that they can construct valid and reliable tests for the population with which we are dealing.

What norms would we use? Let us for purposes of this discussion define a norm as the test scores of some specified group to which an individual's score can be compared.

Are we going to compare scores made on standarized tests by migrant farmers with children in elementary or high school? Can we compare their scores with scores made on similar tests with young adults in college? No doubt some one may suggest that we use our middle class norms and standards whatever they may be. Until very recently this group (migrant and seasonal farmers) could be accurately numbered among the invisible Americans. The events of time and the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity have somewhat brought national attention to the problems of the group and, as a result, many organizations that previously paid absolutely no attention to this segment of the population are hurriedly constructing tests that they claim are valid and reliable.

Quoting Homer Kempfer, one of our contemporaries in the field of adult education, he said: Americans have been leaders in objective research. The experimental method, which demands that every theory be rigidly tested before acceptance, is a forte with us, and it applies just as well to our study of human relationships as to our study of physical relationships. This method of reflective thinking, theorizing, studying, testing, and reaching tentative conclusions lies at the heart of much of the education needed for living in a changing world.

The emphasis upon reflective thinking and scientific inquiry in education does not rule out non-intellectual activities that are also important for human growth, development and adjustment.

Research in psychology and biology is leading us more and more to believe that thinking involves the total person interacting with his whole environment -- environment here means his immediate and past external surroundings and experiences of the person together with his internal responses to them.

Expressing emotion and sharing emotional experiences, associating with others in work, play, love, and worship, and participating in other activities all contribute to our education. How well are we qualified at this point to measure this type of incidental learning for the population with which we are concerned is debatable. Still more important is the fact that incidental learning, which has relevance to their present condition or their future aspirations, may be the only type of learning that occurs.

Recognizing that this is very possible one has to be extremely careful that tests and the uses made of test results are placed in their proper perspective when working with groups having the characteristics of seasonal and migrant farmers.

Quoting from Dr. Fred A. Croft's paper which he presented to State Supervisors of Adult Basic Education in Indiana, Croft pointed out that adult educators are by no means agreed as to the place or even the need for testing in adult education programs. It is not important whether adult educators agree or disagree on the place of testing in adult basic education catering to migrant farmers providing that they achieve the fundamental objective of igniting the motivational and aspirational processes among the group to aspire to higher goals.

In tackling this gigantic job, we must set forth on the difficult task of repairing the damages of the past. We should not judge success only in terms of the client's ability to read, write, and do arithmetic, but rather in terms of his entire personality and the promise he exhibits of changing as a result of his new experiences in adult education learning situations.

In any testing program we must be mindful of the following:

1) The purpose of the program - It must be recognized at all times that tests are only tools and that measurement is always a means to an end, never an end in itself. Thus, the value of any testing program depends on the use made of the results. Merely giving tests without rhyme, rule, or reason is money, time, and effort wasted. The purpose of testing in Seasonal and Migrant Farmers Educational Program is not to measure but to diagnose. It is not intended to indicate who fails or passes but rather to give us some insights as to the degree and intensity of help needed by a given client or group. For this population, tests also take on a new dimension and that is making the clients test-wise. It won't be long in this society before the man who is applying for the most menial job will have to take a test and then fill out an application form covering his life history. If we expect that these migrant farmers should change their station in life then we should face the facts and spend a lot of time teaching them how to be "test wise."

2) Selecting the appropriate tests - It is not too difficult to find tests for adults who are engaged in continuing education and it is even easier if it is a formal and not an informal adult education. Adult educators have a tendency to tie together continuing education and basic adult education. This does not make sense. One group has some education and can continue, the other has literally no formal education and is trying to start. They are really not continuing the education they have started and yet they are adults, some with experiences in living beyond what we can ever hope to get.

Ordinarily, an adequate testing program will involve the use of more than one type of test, but that is if we have a reservoir from which to draw. If considerations of time and money make it advisable to limit the testing program to one standardized test for determining the present status of the group the best choice will usually be a test battery. There are over thirty test companies in the country which publish test batteries, but only one that I know of has attempted to develop a test battery for this population. I am not here to promote any company so please don't ask me to name the companies. Users of standardized tests should find the Mental Measurement Yearbooks of great value and as for the classification of tests, the Fifth Mental Measurement Yearbook will be of special value.

d) To discover discussion topics or group activities which are related to the personal interests and needs of members of the group.

e) To suggest approaches by which a group leader can establish more personalized relationships with the members of a group.

In many situations, and primarily those in which large numbers of sub-professionals are employed and those programs which cater to participants who can read, the Mooney Problem Check List and others similar to this instrument should supersede the first testing phase.

ADMINISTERING THE TESTS

In order to insure that tests are properly administered, two questions must be answered:

a) When should the tests be administered?

b) Who should administer the test?

There is some disagreement as to when is the best time to administer the tests. Teachers who are drawn from high schools and elementary schools to work with seasonal and migrant farmers in general want to administer some form of test to their class in the first week. This may be wrong. Adults who are not accustomed to highly formal learning situations should be given a chance to settle down. Rushing the testing program may do more harm than good. In some learning situations the word test is not used at all. We may refer to a reading exercise or a mathematical exercise or what have you, but it is much better not to use the word test around the group. Many of us remember our days in college and you should also remember that when some professors said that they were going to give a test, certain fears and apprehensions among the class were almost unavoidable. From your own experiences, therefore, it is not hard to imagine what fears and apprehensions migrant and seasonal farmers may have about being tested. Two to three weeks after class begins, depending on the teacher's ability to establish rapport, may be time enough to administer the first diagnostic test.

It is not always an easy matter to tell who is really competent to administer standardized tests. In the case of individual tests of the Stanford-Binet or Wechsler Type, only persons who have had sufficient specific instructions should attempt to administer them. This is another major limitation. Teachers in the program are not trained to administer the more sophisticated standardized tests. Even where the simpler individual diagnostic reading tests are used such as the Gray Oral Reading Test type, much time should be spent with the teachers in training them to administer the tests. There is still little doubt in anyone's mind that the teacher should be an integral part of the testing program and, wherever possible, the teacher should be the person who administers the tests. It is not too difficult to train the alert and qualified teacher to administer the simpler tests. One of the best ways is to get a group of teachers together and demonstrate the administration of the test. A good way to do this is to give a demonstration with a group having similar characteristics as the seasonal and migrant farmers and to follow this by a discussion with the examiners of the procedure they have seen. Another way is to administer the test to the examiner themselves. Regardless of which way the training is done it should be followed by a full discussion of the procedures involved.

Some of the most used tests that have some relevance to the population which we are concerned are as follows:

I. California Achievement Tests
II. Gray Oral Reading Tests
III. New Stanford Arithmetic Test
IV. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
V. Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale
VI. The Strong Vocational Interest Blank
VII. Gray-Votaw-Rogers General Achievement Test (G.V.R.)

None of these tests, in my judgment, meet the requirements for this group. However, it may be that sections of each of these tests can be extracted, rewritten, and rephrased to meet the understandings of the group.

One must not assume that the testing program should be restricted to the use of standardized tests. Teacher-made tests will have a large part in any complete testing program. The unfortunate situation is that qualified teachers for these programs are few and far between. There are some programs in operation now where primarily sub-professionals are being used and one cannot expect that degree of sophistication (constructing tests) from sub-professionals.

An instrument which may have some value, providing the individual can read a little, is the Mooney Problem Check List. The essential value of this check list is to help individuals express their personal problems. The language is simple and can be easily understood. The adult form was developed for use with late adolescents and adults who are principally of non-student status. This instrument has its maximum value in terms of helping the teacher understand her clients when it is scored and interpreted by a qualified counselor. The counselor in turn will then brief the teacher on individual students. The areas covered in the check list are health, economic security, self-improvement, personality, home and family, courtship, sex, religion, and occupation. This is not a test but it is a useful instrument in determining problems among sub-professionals and participants who can read. The fact that you have to use a counselor is not difficult to overcome because there are many counselling centers throughout the country and several in some states. The instrument itself is self-administering, all the directions needed are on the cover page. Assuming that prior arrangements are made with a counselor or counselling center, then all the teacher would have to do is to forward the completed instrument to the counselor or counselling center. Information received from the check list may be used in several ways:

a) To find out what problems the members of the group are concerned about in their personal lives.

b) To help locate those who need counselling or individual help with problems relating to health, social relations, personality, marriage, religion, occupation, etc.

c) To help determine the most prevalent problems expressed within the group, as a basis for utilization and expansion of facilities or for the development of program planning.

It is usually well to suggest that after each examiner studies the manual of whatever test is being used, he tries the procedures on some other person, perhaps a member of his family, or two teachers may try it on each other. It has been found that if such measures are taken, the regular teachers can obtain practically the same results as the professional examiner.

SCORING THE TESTS

Accuracy in scoring cannot be taken for granted. The scorers must be "taught" how to score the papers not merely be "told" how to do it. They should be given an opportunity to study the manual and the scoring keys and, whenever possible, an actual demonstration of scoring should follow. It is a good idea, also, to check carefully the first few papers marked by beginners to detect errors at the outset.

In spite of these preventive measures, certain errors are likely to occur. The safest plan, therefore, is to have each set of papers marked a second time by different scorers. If a complete rescoring does not seem practical, a sampling method may be followed. Every third or fifth paper, for example, may be selected and carefully rescored and, if only an occasional minor error is found, the whole set may be carefully accepted. On the other hand if frequent and serious errors are found in these sample papers, then the entire set should be rescored.

It is my judgment that teachers of migrant and seasonal farmers should not be burdened with the responsibility of scoring the tests; the administrators of the projects may find it much more facilitating, time-saving, and more accurate if he farms the test scoring task out to some competent person(s) who have access to the services of graduate students.

ANALYZING AND INTERPRETING THE SCORES

Assuming that any test given has been scored and checked, the next step is the analysis and interpretation of the results. Naturally both processes go together, for analysis is definitely meaningless without interpretation. An analysis of errors appearing in the test papers is usually of major importance to the teacher. The basic steps involved in analysis and interpretation are:

a) Classification and tabulation of the scores
b) Statistical analysis of scores
c) Graphical analysis and representation
d) Use of norms and standards
e) Analysis of errors

In a complete testing program all five steps will receive attention, although not always to the same degree. If the primary purpose of the testing program is to diagnose, and this is what our program is concerned about, use of norms would be relatively unimportant while analysis of errors would be extremely important.

APPLYING THE TEST RESULTS

The application of the results is the most important phase of the testing program. Whatever value the test must have depends almost entirely on the application of the results. Essentially, the

test results should serve the following purposes:

a) Diagnose participants' needs either individually or as a group.

b) Determine the initial placement of the participants.

c) Help to measure achievement and progress within the group.

d) Help to discover what changes should be made in the teaching program or teaching methods in order to better reach the participants.

e) Determine the eligibility of the student for certification for an elementary or secondary diploma.

Finally, it must be made clear here that to understand a person is not enough to know what his aptitudes and abilities are. We need to know in some depth about the motivational aspect of his personality, his needs, interests, and goals and the means by which he tries to achieve them. When all this is known then we are in a position to help the individual. But don't depend on tests to give you but a minute part of what you want to know about the population with which we are concerned.

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